

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-00 /069 W

-----111422 071114Z /17

R 070811Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1540

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAKAR 7327

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SOPN, SG

SUBJECT: " A LITTLE WOUNDED SWALLOW IN THE DAKAR SPRING"

1. SUMMARY DESPITE ARREST (AND JAILING FOR ONE MONTH) OF DIRECTOR OF SATIRICAL MONTHLY, LE POLITICIEN, AS WELL AS DEFAMATION CHARGES AGAINST THAT NEWSPAPER AND MAMADOU DIA'S ANDE SOPI, SENEGALESE JOURNALISTS REMAIN STRIKINGLY OUTSPOKEN AND UNRESTRICTED. POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT GOVERNMENT COULD CRACKDOWN MORE STERNLY BETWEEN NOW AND FEBRUARY ELECTIONS, BUT, AS CURRENT JEUNE AFRIQUE REMARKS, SENEGALESE OPPOSITION PRESS HAS FLOURISHED IN NASCENT MULTIPARTY SYSTEM TO EXTENT WHICH WOULD BE "UNIMAGINABLE IN MOST AFRICAN COUNTRIES." END SUMMARY.

2. FURTHER TO DAKAR A-79 ON THE STATUS OF MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY AND PRESS FREEDOM IN SENEGAL, EMBASSY COMMENDS TO DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION NOV 4. JEUNE AFRIQUE COVER STORY ON SAME SUBJECT. JA'S POINT OF DEPARTURE IS "TEMPEST" PROVOKED BY RECENT ARREST OF FOUNDER MAM LESS DIA OF SATIRICAL MONTHLY LE POLITICIEN FOR PUBLISHING PAPERS ALLEGEDLY PURLOINED FROM COURT FILES. (ARREST WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DESCRIBED IN SEPT. USIS MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT, COPY OF WHICH POUCHED AF/W). JA ALSO REPORTS DEFAMATION CHARGES AGAINST LE POLITICIEN BY PRESIDENT SENGHOR FOR REPRINTING UNSUBSTANTIATED ARTICLE FROM CANARD ENCHAINE CLAIMING SENGHOR HELD PROPERTIES IN NORMANDY. HOWEVER, AFTER CONDUCTING PRISON INTERVIEW WITH SEEMINGLY UNPERTURBED DIA AND MAKING ADMIRING SURVEY OF

SENEGAL'S PROLIFERATING OPPOSITION PRESS, JA  
CONCLUDES: "IT'S WINTER PRACTICALLY EVERYWHERE IN  
AFRICA (WITH) THE RIGOR OF SINGLE-PARTY SYSTEMS,  
REPRESSION, AND THE MUZZLED PRESS; MAM LESS DIA IS A  
LITTLE WOUNDED SWALLOW IN THE DAKAR SPRING."

3. IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT SENEGAL'S INCREASINGLY BRASH  
INDEPENDENT PRESS WOULD EVENTUALLY COME UP AGAINST OUTER  
LIMITS TO PERMISSIBLE CONDUCT, AND GOVERNMENT CRITICS WARN  
THAT RECENT EVENTS COULD PRESAGE FULL-SCALE PRESS  
CRACKDOWN. BUT SO FAR LE POLITICIEN'S DIFFICULTIES HAVE  
SCARECELY INHIBITED LOCAL MEDIA. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
SENEGALESE JOURNALISTS VIGOROUSLY CONDEMNED DIA'A ARREST  
(LEADING GOVERNMENT TO CONVOKE JOURNALISTS TO LECTURE THEM  
ON RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL AS PRIVILEGES, ENTAILED BY  
FREEDOM OF PRESS). LE POLITICIEN'S OCT. 25 ISSUE OBSERVES  
BLITHELY THAT JAILING OF PAPER'S PDIRECTOR GAVE WELCOME  
BOOST TO ITS PRESTIGE. CURRENT ANDE SOPI (MOUTHPIECE FOR  
FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND CONVICTED COUP-PLOTTER MAMADOU  
DIA) CARRIES BITING FRONT-PAGE SATIRE OF SENGHOR  
FOR SELF-GLORIFICATION THROUGH ACQUISITION OF PRESIDENTIAL  
BOEING 727, LAST YEAR'S ELABORATE 70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION,  
AND OTHER PERCEIVED EXCESSES. NOTING SENGHOR'S FREQUENT  
FOREIGN TRAVEL, ANDE SOPPI HAS HIM SAYING "I KNOW FOREIGN  
LANDS LIKE THE PALM OF MY HAND. I AM IN TRANSIT HERE."  
ARTICLE PROMPTED NOV 3. PUBLIC REPLY BE PRESIDENTIAL  
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CABINET DIRECTOR MOUSTAPHA NIASSE RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC  
CRITICISMS AND ASKING "WHY SO MUCH HATRED? WHY? WHY;"

4. SENGHOR INSISTS THAT INDEPENDENCE OF JUDICIARY, AS WELL  
AS FREEDOM OF PRESS, IS AT STAKE IN MAM LESS DIA DOCUMENT  
THEFT CASE, AND SAYS HE WILL NOT INERFERE DESPITE PROTEXTS  
OVER ARREST. BUT DIA WAS FREED OCT 31  
PENDING TRIAL AND SENGHOR AGREED TO DROP DEFAMATION  
SUIT SINCE DIA HAD SENT LETTERS OF APOLOGY. IT REMAINS  
TO BE SEEN WHETHER AUTHORITIES WILL TAKE MORE DECISIVE  
MEASURES TO CONTAIN PRESS REPLIES BETWEEN NOW AND

FEBRUARY 28 ELECTIONS. THEY MAY NOT NEED TO. COSTLY  
LEGAL BATTLES NECESSITATED BY PROLIFERATING DEFAMATION  
SUITS COULD CRIPPLE FLEDGLING OPPOSITION ORGANS.  
(LE POLITICIEN HAS LAUNCHED "OPERATION SURVIVAL" TO  
SOLICIT DONATIONS.) BUT SENEGALESE PRESS HAS FLOURISEHD  
OPOI PAST YEAR IN FASHION WHICH, AS JEUNE AFRIQUE REMARKED,  
WOULD BE "UNIMAGINABLE IN MOST AFRICAN COUNTRIES," AND,  
FOR THE MOMENT, IT REMAINS STRIKINGLY UNINTIMIDATED AND  
UNRESTRICTED.  
COHEN

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Review Markings:**  
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